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## NOTES ON THE PLAINS CREE

By ALANSON SKINNER

THE following data on the Plains Cree were gathered during June, 1913, on the Keewistaihou reserve and adjacent reservations under the Round Lake agency, Saskatchewan. The writer's object in visiting this, one of the more easterly bands of Plains Cree, was to obtain information on their military organization for the American Museum of Natural History. The notes here presented were taken during lulls in the regular work, which was itself carried on vicariously, owing to the exceedingly restless habits of the Cree, who could not be induced to refrain from roving about. The rest of the material collected, including a brief description of the Sun dance and about a score of myths and stories, mainly concerning the culture hero, will some time be published by the American Museum of Natural History. As the writer does not expect to go among the Plains Cree again, at least in the near future, these notes are offered with the permission of the Museum merely that they may be placed on record, as even brief and fragmentary information often proves of value to the student.

The principal informants were Four Clouds, Spotted One, Assiniboine, God's Head, God's Child, Neil Sâwâstim, and Jacob and Andrew Bear. The Miss Paget referred to is Amelia M. Paget, author of *People of the Plains*.

*Giving of Names.*—While a child is still young it is customary for the parents to call upon four old men and to ask them to give it a name. This is done when the child is about one year old. The parents gather a quantity of clothing and other presents, and a lot of food; then four old men, whom the parents have selected because of their fame for powerful dreams and for their war exploits, are invited by a runner who bears them tobacco and a pipe. Each tries to dream from then on, and when the appointed day arrives, the four men appear at the spot designated, where the parents have

prepared a feast and where other guests are assembled. When all is in readiness, a pipe is filled and given to the spokesman of the elders, who rises and addresses the people. He tells them of whom or what he has been dreaming, and gives the infant a name that has some reference to his visions or to one of his adventures in war. He then turns to his three assistants and afterward to the people in general, asking each to repeat the name aloud and to call upon the namer's dream guardian to bless the child.

After this there is a feast, for which each person has brought his or her own dish and spoon. Any of the viands that cannot be eaten are taken home by the guests, as they are partly sacred and may not be thrown away.

In former times it was taboo to ask a man directly for his name, although it is now done very freely. The only time a man ever mentioned his own name was when he had done a brave deed. On such an occasion he might repeat the story of his exploit to his friends, crying, for instance, "I am Kiwistaihau, and that is the way I am accustomed to do!"

Sometimes a child was sickly, and the doctor on investigation would dream that it was wrongly named, and prescribe a change. If the diagnosis was correct, the child would recover in from a day to four days, and all was well.

In *People of the Plains* (pp. 9-12) Miss Paget gives some data on naming customs which I could not get corroborated at the Crooked Lake reserves, but which seem to refer to the Saulteaux, and not to the Cree.

*Menstrual Taboo.*—The law insisting on the isolation of women during their monthly periods is by no means so strong among the Plains Cree, or among the Saulteaux for that matter, as among the Central Algonkin. When a girl undergoes her first menses she is tabooed from society for a period of ten days. During subsequent menstrual periods she is not obliged to leave the family lodge, but only to eat from her own dishes and spoons during this time, except in the case of those who are the wives of the keepers of important medicines. Such women are obliged to camp by themselves.

Menstruating women might not scratch their heads save with a stick. They wore their hair loose and were forbidden to comb it or to wash for four days. Four Clouds knew of one man who for some reason had a personal taboo against head-scratching with his fingers, and always carried a stick for the purpose.

*Dream Fasting.*—When a child, regardless of sex, approaches or reaches the age of puberty, it is given a course of training to inure it to the hardships of the puberty fast. The youngster is made to

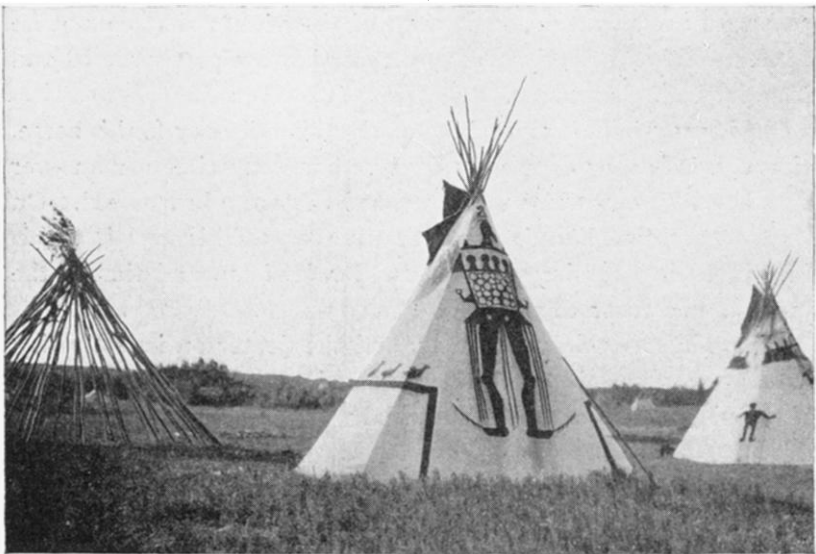


FIG. 8.—Cree tipis, one showing anthropomorphic thunderbird, the dream guardian of the owner. Ceremonial lodge frame at the left.

take off all his clothing and wander naked in the bush without food or drink for a period of from one day to two days, and so on. When the time is come he is sent out naked into the bush; in the case of boys the entire body is painted white, or the face only is daubed with yellow ochre. The child is expected to build a little shelter of boughs, and there to await a dream of revelation.

These dreams, it is said, are about animals of any sort, rather than about the gods, as among the Menomini, but owing to a strict taboo against telling these dreams which prevails among the Plains

Cree, as well as among the members of the eastern division of that people, no examples were collected. The Plains Cree men were accustomed to fast a number of times during their lives for further revelation. These fasts sometimes lasted as long as ten days.

Four Clouds said that the first time his father was put to the test in his early training before the great fast, his grandfather sent one of the old men of the band a pipe and some goods which he requested the old man to "throw away". The ancient assented and accepted the pipe to pray for the lad. Four Cloud's grandfather then stripped the boy, although it was in midwinter, painted him from head to foot with white clay, and sent him to the top of a high hill. The little fellow stayed out some time but felt the cold only a very little. When he returned the old man to whom the presents had been given smoked a prayer to the gods.

The Plains Cree calls his dream guardian his "grandfather" and paints it on his tent more prominently than anything else. Judging by the figures seen on tipis, the Thunder, in semi-human or entirely bird form, is an object frequently dreamed of (fig. 8). Sexual intercourse is forbidden to anyone prior to attempting to dream, either before the puberty fast or later in life, and it is also tabooed to those about to attend a ceremony or go to war. Sacrifices of valuables are made to dream guardians to secure their good will (fig. 9).

*Marriage Customs.*—With one exception all the Indians inter-



FIG. 9.—A sacrifice of blankets, broadcloth, etc., to a man's guardian spirit.

viewed said that there were no marital restrictions, except for members of the immediate family closer than what we call first cousins. Neil Sâwûstim alone declared that in ancient times the bands were exogamous, at least as a rule. Attempts to find the truth by collecting data on individual marriages failed to show anything worthy of note, for the Cree have not followed any such rule from the time they began to live on reserves thirty or more years ago, and in the majority of cases the old men have younger wives taken from their own bands since they have lived on the reserve. Four Clouds' wife came from another reserve, but the occasion was quite by accident; he happened to meet her while visiting there. Inasmuch as the Plains Cree deny that they have the gentile system in any form, although recognizing its existence among the *Saulteaux*, it seems possible that there may never have been any definite marriage restrictions. Polygyny was practised, but has long been given up. Four Clouds' father had seven wives.

The marriage procedure was simple—a youth simply asked the girl's father for her, or a man desiring to have a youth for his son-in-law would send his daughter to the young man's tipi with a suit of clothes of her own make. There was no feast or further ceremony. A man went to live with his parents-in-law after marriage.

If a man murdered his wife through jealousy, as sometimes happened, he had to pay eight horses to his wife's relatives, or, if he could not afford this, he might flee alone on the warpath, kill one of the foe, and return to paint the faces of his parents-in-law with charcoal. They might then spare him. Eight horses, or an enemy's scalp, constituted the usual blood-money demanded by the parents of any murdered person.

*Parent-in-Law Taboo.*—The taboo against a man speaking to his father-in-law or mother-in-law was formerly very rigidly enforced. When the son-in-law lived in the same lodge with his wife's parents, as often happened, a partition was put up to separate him from the others. This was often observed by Jacob Bear when he was a buffalo hunter. If a man wished to ask a question of his mother-in-law, he would inform his wife and then leave the tent. She on her part would not speak to her mother until her

husband was gone. The father-in-law taboo was in force, but not so strongly. I have frequently heard Indians about the Round Lake mission say of individuals, "Why, he is like a half-breed; he talks to his mother-in-law."

There was one occasion, however, when a man might speak to his parents-in-law. When he returned from a successful war excursion, he went directly to them, with his face blackened with charcoal, told them what he had done, gave them part or all of his spoils, and then blackened their faces, beginning with his father-in-law. This was a great honor to them. The taboo was never entirely lifted.

The joking-relationship is said not to exist.

*Terms of Relationship.*—The following terms are recorded:

<i>n'gawi</i> or <i>nimama</i>	my mother
<i>n'tosis</i>	my mother's sister
<i>n'ókomis</i> or <i>notawis</i>	my mother's brother
<i>n'gosis</i> or (wrong way) <i>n'danis</i>	my mother's sister's daughter
<i>nicis</i>	my father's brother
	my father-in-law (man or woman speaking)
<i>n't'èkwatim</i>	my father's brother's son
	my sister's or brother's son-in-law
<i>nicimis</i>	my father's brother's daughter
<i>notawi</i> or <i>nipapa</i>	my father
<i>nigawis</i>	my father's sister
<i>nictic</i> (or, not so good) <i>nijoam</i>	my elder brother
<i>ni'cim</i>	my younger brother
	my younger sister
<i>ninos'um</i>	my mother's or father's father
<i>nokûm</i>	my mother's or father's mother
<i>ni'wikimagûn</i>	my wife
<i>niwû</i>	
<i>nin'apim</i>	my husband
<i>ni'mis</i>	my elder sister
<i>ni'cikwas</i>	my mother-in-law
<i>nitistawa</i>	relation of parents-in-law to each other
<i>nisis</i>	my mother's sister's husband
<i>n'dosis</i>	my mother's brother's wife
<i>nictau</i>	my brother's wife's brother
<i>nitauwu'emau</i>	my brother-in-law's wife
<i>nitciwana</i>	my sister-in-law's husband

<i>nictau</i>	my sister's husband (man speaking)
<i>niti'm</i>	my sister's husband (woman speaking)
	my brother's wife (man or woman speaking)
	my brother's wife's sister (woman speaking)
<i>ninahacim</i>	my son-in-law
<i>nictim</i>	my daughter
<i>ninahaganickwim</i>	my daughter-in-law

*Burial Customs.*—Among the Plains Cree bands assembled at the Crooked Lake agency, scaffold burial is not practised, and according to all of our informants it never has been. The funeral ceremonies are as follows:

When a person dies the body is arrayed in all his best clothes. It is carried out through the side or back of the tent, the walls being raised for that purpose. As the body is taken out an old man especially invited for the purpose begins to count his coups, giving the proceeds of his past successful raids to the soul of the dead for use on its journey to the hereafter. This, as will be observed, is a modification of the typical Central Algonkin ceremony. The address to the corpse is somewhat as follows:

"I went to war at such a time, I want to tell you. I took [so many] horses, and you shall ride on the best one of them. At [such a place] I killed [so-and-so]; he will go with you and guide you and light your fires. I took meat and provisions from a lodge [in such a place]; have that for your sustenance."

There are said to be only two men now living under this agency (1913) qualified to perform this rite. They are Big Head and Spotted One.

From the head of the body of an old person a little hair is sometimes cut off and saved. It is asked from time to time to give the survivors a blessing. In the old days when a man was a member of the Mitéwin, the hair was eventually taken to the grave, the contents of the medicine-bag of the deceased was poured over it, and it was buried. The placing of the hair in a bundle to be kept by the chief mourner, as practised by the Central tribes, was not followed.

The grave is made small and lined with blankets. The body is placed in it, upright, with legs drawn up, and with it are placed



all personal property, a fact which accounts for the extreme rarity of antique articles among these Cree. A pipe and tobacco are always included, so that when the soul of the deceased reaches the other land it can give the ruler a smoke, saying, "My friends that I have left behind are forlorn; I pray you give them good fortune."

When the body has been deposited in the grave, sticks are placed over it to prevent the earth from touching it, and these are covered with a blanket, skin, or robe, and the hole is filled in. Over it is erected a little canvas-covered tent roof, somewhat similar to the grave-houses of the Saulteaux and the Central Algonkin, but lacking the hole for egress of the spirit, and such of the deceased person's effects as cannot be placed in the grave are piled outside. The Reverend Dr Hugh Mackay informs me that large sacrifices of cloth were heaped on Loud Voice's grave, and Jacob Bear adds that his gun, bow, and pipe were also left outside.

When the interment is completed, the mourners blacken their faces, loosen their hair, and attire themselves in rags. They slash their forearms and calves, and some even slash their horses. The period of mourning lasts for two years or less, but widows especially mourn for the longer time. The four nights' fire by the grave, so commonly lighted by the Central peoples, is not made by the Plains Cree.

When the mourners return from the grave, a feast is celebrated, and each person present offers a spoonful of food to the dead. One year later the *Wikokeo*, or Feast of the Dead, is celebrated at the grave. If the deceased was a child, only children would be invited by the mourners, and so on. Old men, the elders of the tribe, were called on to offer food or pipes to the dead at long intervals thereafter.

Years ago, while trading with a band of Plains Cree far out on the northern prairie, Jacob Bear attended a "pagan" burial. He gave the following account of what he saw:

"When the child died, a small hole was dug out on the prairie. An old man was called to the tipi where the body lay, to talk, and when there he counted his coups, saying, 'Those that I have killed will accompany you to the hereafter and make your camps for you.' When he had finished, the body was taken out through the side of the tent

amid great wailing, and was carried to the grave, where it was caused to sit upright, was wrapped in dressed skins, and lowered into the hole, which was only a few feet deep. All its toys and utensils were placed about it; a roof of sticks was made over it. The child's parents cut off a lock of its hair and cut off all their own just at the ears, as a sign of mourning. They put their hair in the grave with the body. They cut their arms and legs with a flint or a knife, and rubbed charcoal on their faces. Then the grave was filled, and the funeral was over."

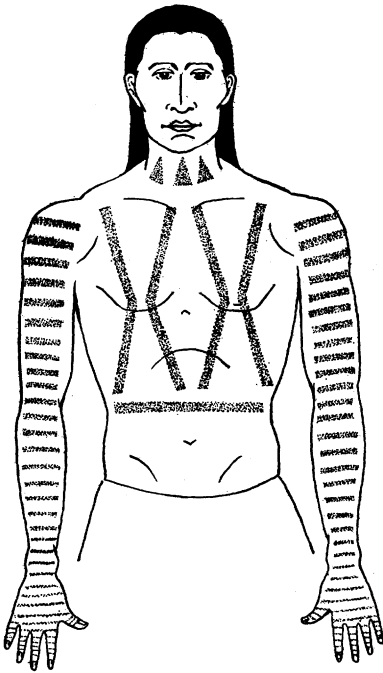


FIG. 10.—Tattooing of Plains Cree.  
From a native sketch by S. Ichikawa.

Jacob Bear added that when a man died his clothing was given away, and new garments furnished for the corpse. His tent was also given away. When a woman died her husband lost his tent in this fashion, but the people furnished him with a new one, something which was not done for a widow. Dr Mackay says that whenever a prominent man dies the Indians cease using the camping place where the death occurred.

*Souls.*—There are two kinds of souls, one, the *tcipai*, which stays behind with the corpse in the grave, and another the *niu-kaneo*, which goes to the hereafter.

The first, when seen, resembles blue fire; it is the sort that haunts folks. The second can sometimes be heard to cry out; it whistles like a gopher (a small burrowing rodent of the prairie that has a shrill call). When the northern lights are seen the Cree think them the spirits dancing in the hereafter.

*Tattooing.*—Many men were tattooed in the old days—some because they dreamed they should be, others because their wives urged them to do so and show their bravery. The design usually

employed was sketched in part and described by Four Clouds as below. Jacob Bear has seen many also. The whole body was covered (fig. 10), but the neck was the most painful place to mark. Only certain persons might do the work, and they obtained the right through dreams. A man who desired to be thus marked had to fee the tattooer well unless he dreamed that he must be tattooed, in which case the work was done free of charge. Women were slightly marked on the face for the sake of ornament (fig. 11).

The man desiring to be decorated comes to the dreamer and gives him tobacco. He receives it, and in return sings a song asking mercy of the spirit powers and help from doing wrong. The dreamer then burns the tobacco and points his pipestem downward, toward the region from which the powers sprang. The patient then lies down, and the dreamer commences to operate with eight needles fastened together. As he works he sings "*Musinuwahagé yé eh*", etc.

The patient writhed under the torture, and some young men fainted or cried out that they could not stand it. It was customary, when it was obvious that the youth was about to succumb, to call his sweetheart to sit beside him and so shame him into bearing the pain bravely before her. When the operation was finished, medicine to allay the inflammation was put on like a poultice and held down by a cover made from the hard smoked part of the skin tipi.

*Mitéwin, or Medicine Lodge Society.*—There were four degrees in, the *Mitéwin*, members of each of which were distinguished by their facial painting, the design of which had some relation to their knowledge of medicines.

Birchbark records holding the songs and rituals were kept. It is said that these birchbarks had the figures of animals drawn upon them.

Medicine-bags were made preferably of otter, mink, or weasel skin, although some of snake-skin were used. Bear-skin bags were regarded as evil.

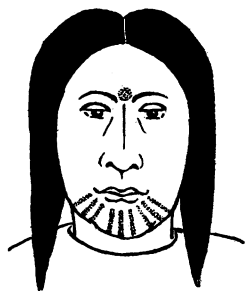


FIG. 11.—Facial tattooing of woman. Drawing by S. Ichikawa.

A week was devoted to praying and fasting before the ceremony was held. Then the lodge was erected. Old people joined because they were instructed to do so in their dreams, young persons in order to be cured of illness. A person who had thus joined the society was a member during the remainder of his life.

After the week of preparation (the Central Algonkin devote only four days to this purpose), the last day is spent in supplication to the gods. The Cree at Round Lake denied any knowledge of the origin of the society, adding that their Saukteaux friends attributed it not to Nānibozhu but to the "Great Spirit". The Cree said the songs of the society came from *K'ce Manitu*. It is said that it no longer exists at Round Lake, as all the members are dead. The few who still know anything about the lodge have no birchbark writings with which to keep record.

*Wábanowin*.—The *Wábanowin* performers were accustomed to plunge their hands into kettles of boiling water and remove objects without injury to themselves. They could take things from the fire, because they were protected by medicines which they rubbed on their bodies. Sometimes one of these shamans would swallow a red-painted or notched stick a couple of feet long; again an empty revolver would be gulped down and then brought up loaded.

*Conjurors*.—The order known to the Ojibwa as *Nibikēd*, or *Jesakēd*, existed also among the Plains Cree. The performer was bound tightly hand and foot, and placed in a little tightly made lodge, which he caused to shake while he prophesied. Doctors used to drive away evil spirits with noises. One famous man had the skull of his grandfather, who was a celebrated physician, to aid him in his work. Prayer was much used.

*Medicines*.—Jacob Bear was once overcome by the medicine-doll love-charm. A woman secured him for intercourse during broad daylight. He was unconscious of what he was doing. Afterward friends cured him. They cut the hair on his crown and both temples, and applied medicines.

Jacob Bear says the Plains Cree have many powerful love-medicines which other Indians buy from them. There is also a medicine which is tied to a tree-top to make people crazy as it

sways in the breeze. This "crazy medicine" (also known to the Menomini) consisted of a hair, a bit of nail-paring, or even some small shreds of the victim's garment that had been secretly procured by a malignant sorcerer. The medicine was suspended from the branch, and the more the wind blew the more the medicine danced and the crazier the victim became.

*War Exploits and Medicines.*—Once Loud Voice was in a hole fighting, while the others were loading guns. Loud Voice was hit on the head and fell down but was not killed. Then he took bow and arrow and shot an enemy. He was saved by the potency of his medicine.

Buffalo-hoofs, or rather dew-claws, were worn on the garments to deflect bullets magically.

*Archeological Data Bearing on Material Culture.*—According to Spotted One, Four Clouds, and Jacob Bear, arrowpoints were formerly made of moose-bone. Stone points were picked up, but never made. In fact, they were thought to have been manufactured by the *Memegwêciwâg*, or Water Dwarfs. Four Clouds corroborated this statement, and added that his people found stone knives already made or else were obliged to utilize sharp-edged natural stones. Elk-antler tines were hollowed out and used to point arrows.

Clay kettles were said to have been used, but no one remembers how they were made. Some have been found, it is said, on old camp-grounds.

Three kinds of grooved clubs, or hammers, were used. There was a large, heavy type for crushing bones, a smaller variety of the same form for pemmican pounding, and a pointed one for use as a weapon.

Acting on these suggestions, the writer examined the northern bank of the Qu'Appelle river near the eastern end of Round lake, looking over the plowed fields about the Indian school. These fields are known to have been old Cree camping sites, and here, after a tedious search, were found flint chips, stone arrowpoints of both the stemmed and triangular types, a pointed grooved war-club head of stone, and numerous tiny potsherds. A large grooved maul for bone crushing, found by the Rev. Dr Hugh Mackay on the

same fields, was kindly presented by the finder, and a small pemmican maul found on another site was presented by an Indian, Neil Sâwûstim. Other pemmican hammers seen came from the fields searched by the writer. Mr Boyer, clerk at Round Lake agency, has a fine large grooved axe found nearby.

The natural assumption is that these objects are prehistoric Plains Cree relics, as all tally with Cree accounts, except the stone points, and articles of this kind are known to have been made by the Eastern Cree.<sup>1</sup>

*Games.*—The following list of games was obtained from Four Clouds, Jacob Bear, and Neil Sâwûstim:

*Bow-and-Arrow Games.*—Trials of skill between youths, each playing with a partner, were common. The players, to the number of four to six or more, would first construct a mound about three feet high. In this they set up a stick which formed the mark at which they shot with bow and arrows. The winners took the losing arrows after each trial.

The hand arrow game (*tcimatatowu*) consisted of the same arrangement of the mark, the same number of players, and the same rules as for the bow-and-arrow game, but the men threw the arrows by hand instead of using the bow.

The men played a variety of shinny called *pagatuwewin*, which seems to have taken the place of lacrosse. A crooked stick was used instead of a racquet, but the goals and the ball resembled those in vogue in lacrosse.

The typical women's shinny game with the double ball was known. The opposing sides were small, usually numbering only four or five players each.

Hand ball was played by the women, and, at present at least, a crude sort of football is played by the youths.

The bowl and dice game, called *pugetewin*, was much played.

The game of moccasin (hiding a bullet in one of a row of moccasins) was in vogue until recently.

Guessing in which hand a rival held a little stick, was called the

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<sup>1</sup> See Skinner, Notes on the Eastern Cree and Northern Saulteaux, *Anthr. Papers Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, vol. IX, pp. 24, 52.

"hand game". The players, as in the moccasin game, resorted to every contortion and artifice to deceive one another.

In the stick game a bundle of little sticks was divided into odd and even numbers by one player while the other tried to guess which hand held the odd number. Whichever side first successfully guessed four times, won the game. There were two on each side, and one always held the odd number and his partner the even. The game was called *tipaskwunamatuwin*.

The cup-and-pin game was played with buffalo dew-claws strung on a thong and caught on a bone pin. It was called *napaw-hanûk*.

Snow-snake (*sosiman*) was played. The "snakes" were made of wood and were about three feet long. The head-end was fended by a bit of the horn cut from a two-year-old buffalo bull, as such bulls furnished the sharpest and straightest horns. The stick was greased before casting, to make it slide better.

Whipping tops made of stone or the tips of buffalo horns were beaten on the ice by the boys.

*Paints*.—The favorite paints in olden times were derived from clays found in cutbanks. White, yellow, red, and black were the colors usually obtained. The pigment was collected, pulverized, mixed with water, and formed into little cakes which were baked in a fire made from buffalo dung until they were red-hot. They were then removed and cooled, and afterward were kept in small bags. When wanted for use, a portion was scraped off the cake and mixed with hot grease.

*Fire-making*.—The bow-drill was commonly used to produce fire. Oak was the best wood for the shaft; the base was generally of cedar, but sometimes other wood was employed. When a spark was generated it was caught in a bit of punk. It is said that sometimes, when fire was needed and no bow-drill was to be had, two sticks were rubbed together until a spark was produced.

*Cooking*.—Cooking in a bark vessel was not known to or practised by the Plains Cree, but stone-boiling was commonly done by both men and women. A hole was dug about two feet in depth and a foot in circumference, and lined with a bit of fresh rawhide or a buffalo's

stomach, which was pegged down with wooden pins about the rim of the hole. Water was poured in, then meat and blood were thrown in. Hot stones were now brought from a fire near by and dropped into this improvised kettle. In this fashion the meat was soon cooked. In ancient days pottery vessels are said to have been used, but no one now knows how they were made.

Meat was often roasted on a spit before the fire, or it might be wrapped in a buffalo tripe and thrown into the embers, where it was kept until roasted.

Pemmican was made by cutting buffalo meat into long thin steaks and drying them first in the sun, then on a rack or scaffold over a slow but hot fire of buffalo-chips. The dry meat was then placed in a buffalo rawhide, over which another was laid and beaten upon with a flat stone or a stone hammer, or later with a wooden flail. When sufficiently macerated, the meat was mixed with melted buffalo lard, and sometimes with dried saskatoon berries as a relish. The resultant compound was allowed to cool, when it was sewn up in rawhide bags to keep for future use. Pemmican thus preserved is said to have lasted indefinitely. Parfleches were rarely, if ever, used by these Plains Cree; although they knew of them, they preferred rawhide bags.

When lost on the plains in winter, and in need of water, the old people were not always able to obtain wood to melt snow, hence it was customary to fill a kettle with snow and carry it under the blanket next to the body until it melted.

Visitors were always invited to sit in the rear of the lodge in former times, and food was brought to them at once.

*Tanning.*—When an animal of the deer kind, or a buffalo, had been killed, and the Indians wished to make its skin into leather for clothing or tent covering, the beast was flayed and its skin hung on a branch or a frame, and cleansed of flesh by means of a serrated chisel-like scraper of the forest type. In olden times such scrapers were made from the shinbone of a moose or a buffalo, and were provided with wrist braces of thong. If the skin to be treated was a buffalo hide, it was next stretched and pegged to the ground, and the hair removed by means of a hoe scraper with an



elkhorn or wooden handle. If it was a light deerskin it was thrown over a smoothed log, obliquely set up, and the beaming tool was brought to bear. Next the skin was greased and heated slightly, and deer or buffalo liver and brains, mixed to form a tanning fluid, were rubbed in and the skin left in this state all night. In the morning the tanning fluid was scraped off and the skin worked on a string attached vertically to a post until it was flexible; then it was pulled and dried. The process was now finished, but for moccasin leather or tenting it still had to be smoked. To accomplish this the skin was sewed in a bag; reversed, the bottom slung from an inclined stick or a tripod, and the top pegged down about a little hole in which a punk-wood fire burned. In winter, when it was impossible to dig a hole, the punk fire was made in a kettle suspended under the inverted bag.

*Bows, Arrow-straighteners.*—For the manufacture of bows the preferred materials were oak or cherry wood. When the bow was shaped, a green hide was boiled for a long time until it was of glue-like consistency. It was then taken and fitted to the back of the bow and tied firmly in place with sinew. Sometimes a snake-skin was pulled over the bow to ornament and protect it.

The bowstring was made of sinew from the back or shoulder of the buffalo. It was moistened in the mouth, divided into three strands, and twisted into cord by rolling on the thigh with the palm. It was then dried, stretched, and straightened before it was ready for use. Stronger ropes were made for other purposes with four strands of sinew.

To straighten warped arrowshafts, buffalo ribs perforated in the middle were used. Buffalo-rib or antler bows, etc., were unknown to the Plains Cree.

*Buffalo Robes.*—Buffalo robes were fleshed and reduced to a desired thickness with the bone scraper, then further reduced with the hoe scraper. After being dried, greased, soaked in brain and liver fluid, and scraped, they were ready for use.<sup>1</sup>

*Tents; Women's Celebration.*—Tents were made of twenty or

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Paget's book, op. cit., p. 72 et seq., has an interesting account of these processes.

more hides, and while manufactured by women were always the property of the men. When a woman had finished a sufficient number of skins for making a tent, she asked her friends to help cut and sew them. There were very few women who could cut the skins properly, so one woman was especially invited to perform this task, and she presided in a way. The invitations were in the

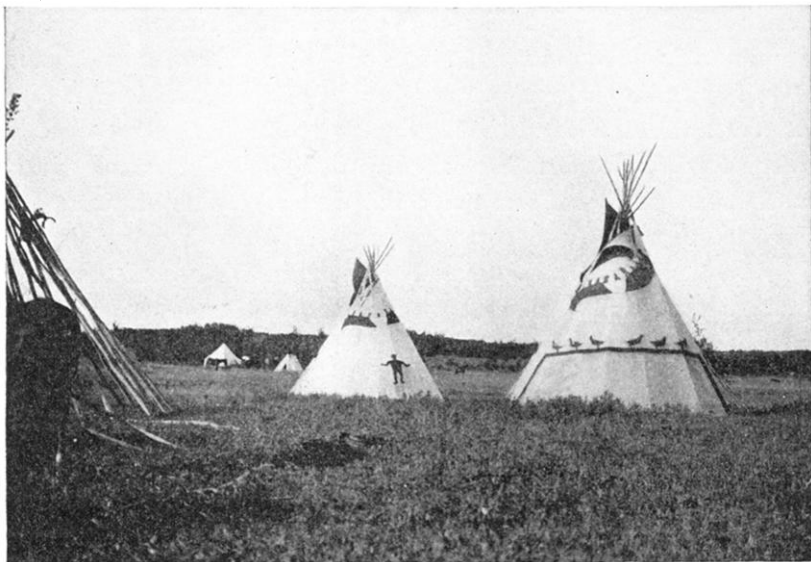


FIG. 12.—Cree camp.

form of tobacco and a pipe sent by a runner, and before the work was commenced a pipe was offered to the "Great Spirit" that his benediction on the work and workers would be given. A feast was held in conclusion, but no men were present. There was no dancing.<sup>1</sup>

The man painted the tents. The principal figure used in the ornamentation was the man's dream guardian. Minor figures were various gods or potent spiritual powers, and in old days coups and ornamental figures. Buffalo horns were painted over the door opening to keep away malevolent spirits. Back-rests were used only in the soldier tents.

<sup>1</sup> See Miss Paget, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

The lodge had a three-pole foundation and a small elliptical door opening, with raised threshold, which was covered with a skin flap of the same shape but larger, and was weighted with a wooden binding. The smoke-flaps had the poles attached through sockets. The principal parts of the tipi are as follows (see fig. 13):

A. *Weskwatermák*, guests' place. Place for medicine at night.

B. Place outside for medicine tripod during the day.

C. *Skuteokan*, fireplace.

D-D. *Pinutakgam*, the opposite sides, used by the occupants.

E. *Iskwatem*, or entrance.

*Dog Sledges and Harness.*

—Dog sledges were much used in winter. These were

made like toboggans, and the dogs, three or four in number, were hitched tandem. Each dog was harnessed with a collar made of wood wrapped with long grass and covered with buffalo leather. The traces extended through these collars and were attached to the leader's collar. The leader was selected for its superior speed and intelligence. Dogs were preferred to horses because they could follow a trail, even during a blinding blizzard, and needed to be fed only once a day.

*Shields.*—Shields were always made of iron in Four Clouds' recollection, but covered with a soft leathern case fringed with eagle quills and weasel skins, and with a band of these ornaments stretched horizontally across it (fig. 14). A man always emblazoned his shield with bars in black, red, or yellow, indicating his exploits in war. If the owner had been a peacemaker, he added the appropriate number of crosses, one for each occasion on which he rendered peaceful service. The shield was hung from the neck by means of a leather strap. This reference to iron shields does not agree

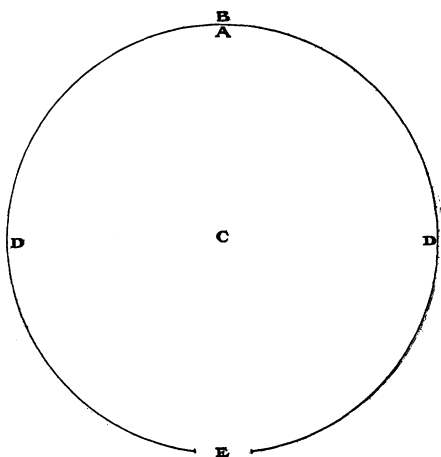


FIG. 13.—Plan of lodge.

with the account of Spotted One, who says they were made of bull-hide stretched with a stick bent and sewn round the edge, and provided with thongs crossed over the back to facilitate holding.

*Qu'Appelle River.*—This stream is designated *Katépoisipi*, "Calling river", because the Indians used to call all kinds of game there.

*Poison.*—A man suspected of poisoning an enemy was tried by the chief and his councillors, and if found guilty he was executed.

*Grace for food.*—I have repeatedly seen the old men hold a dish up and pray before eating.

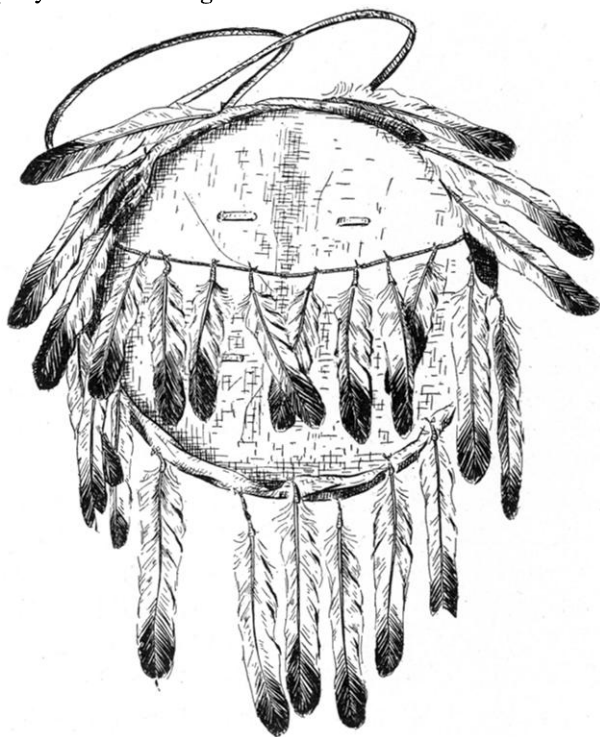


FIG. 14.—Cree shield. Restored from description.

*Bags.*—Small bags of buffalo-calf skin were seen. These were used for the storage of medicines. A *Saulteaux* specimen was obtained, made of the foot skins of a buffalo calf. Woven bags of bark fiber were formerly made.

*River crossing.*—The bullboat and the bark canoe were not used, but Jacob Bear said he and his companions made rafts to cross the

Missouri and ferry over sledges and meat. Such rafts were made by cutting two large logs of equal length for the sides and lashing others to them crosswise. Sometimes the Indians merely lashed two logs together and paddled across. They twisted long grass together to make the ropes for this purpose. Canoes were made by sewing two buffalo hides over a boat-shaped frame; these were for descending the stream.

*Months and Seasons.*—January, *Otcestuwicikauu-picim*, Kissing month; February, *Megisuwi-picim*, Eagle month; March, *Niski-picim*, Geese month; April, *Aiiki-picim*, Frog month; May, *Sägibukau-picim*, Leaves coming out; June, *Opineauwéwi-picim*, Egg month; July, *Upaskuwi-picim*, Molting month; August, *Uskauhu-picim*, Rutting month; September, *Túkwagi-picim*, Fall; October, *Kuskutnu-picim*, Frost everything; November, *Pauwat-citcukinasis-picim*; December, *Pauwatukinum-picim*.

*Sikwûn*, spring; *túkwagin*, fall; *pîpun*, winter; *nîpin*, summer.

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FIG. 15.—Cree youths.